

PALESTINE



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1940.



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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES
FOR THE
YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1940.

INTRODUCTION.

During the year under review, and aided by the decidedly favourable weather, agriculture in Palestine returned steadily towards normal, step by step with the improving conditions of internal security. The outbreak of war affected this progress in a two-fold manner. On the one hand the immediate cessation of such disturbed conditions as were still prevailing in the country enabled the agriculturalist to resume his full seasonal activities. Simultaneously a powerful impetus towards increased production of food-stuffs was given by the international situation and was directed and encouraged by Government through the instrumentality of the Department. Opposed to these favourable factors, however, were the numerous dislocations consequent upon the war, the most important being the interruption of normal lines of communication. The citrus industry which provides the main export crop of the country suffered severely, shipments barely reaching one half of the total for the preceding season.

One Palestine Pound (£P.) = 1,000 mils = One Pound Sterling.

One Dunum (metric) = 1,000 square metres = 0.2471 acre.

Throughout this report the term "Ton" means the metric ton of 1,000 kilogrammes.

SECTION I.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES IN PALESTINE, 1939-40.

MAJOR CROPS.

Citrus.

2. Owing to relatively poor returns to the grower, and with the disturbed conditions in the country, practically no further planting of citrus was undertaken during the year, while a fairly large area already under cultivation was wholly or partially neglected. Early in 1939 the total area under citrus was estimated at 300,000 dunums.

3. The drastic reduction of shipping facilities led to much fruit being withheld and for this reason it is difficult to state the actual production of crop; but after making allowance for severe *Khamsin* winds during the early summer, insufficient cultivation, and infestation of many groves with *Pseudococcus* sp. the crop may be estimated to have been in the region of 12 million cases. Manufacturers of by-products utilised some 9,000 tons of various citrus (=270,000 cases, approx.) while 7,595,646 cases were exported (as compared with 15,310,436 during the previous season), of which 68 per cent. was absorbed by markets in the United Kingdom. In addition 24,000 tons (=720,000 cases, approx.) were exported in bulk to Syria and Egypt. It was generally agreed that on the whole, returns to growers covered little more than seasonal costs of production. Freight rates rose by some 200 per cent. and a considerable proportion of slow and unsuitable tonnage was brought into service.

4. Prior to the opening of the shipping season the regular staff of the Fruit Inspection Service surveyed some 70,000 dunums as part of the survey of *Pseudococcus* infestation, and 3,266 dunums as part of the general citrus survey. The system of maturity tests made on fruit for export prior to the general opening of the season was improved. Instead of the tests being carried out in the groves as in former years, which invariably led to the shipment of a certain quantity of immature fruit, advisory visits were made to the grove by inspectors, but the final and decisive test was carried out on the packed fruit presented for export inspection. Some 19,000 cases of citrus were passed for export prior to the date of general opening.

5. Three experimental shipments of fruit were made in collaboration with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research of the United Kingdom to investigate various methods of disinfecting the fruit in transit, the two rots of major importance to Palestine citrus being green mould (*Penicillium digitatum*) and stem end rot (*Diplodia natalensis*).

Wheat.

1938-39 season.

6. For various reasons there was a reduction in the area sown to wheat. Severe *Khamsin* winds in May caught crops in their most vulnerable stage, and inflicted damage of varying intensity. In Beersheba there was an almost complete failure. The total production of wheat for the 1938-39 season was 89,000 tons of which only a part could be classed as seed wheat.

1939-40 season.

7. At the outbreak of war, despite some endeavours at exploitation by stock holders, there was no abnormal rise in the price of seed wheat. With the approach of the sowing season a committee under the chairmanship of the Controller of Supplies recommended a seed loan, and a sum of £P.30,000 was subsequently allocated for this purpose. In consequence the area sown

was greater than normal, and the crop at the close of the period under review gave every promise of being an excellent one.

Barley.

8. The yield (1938-39) of 86,230 tons from a total of 1,926,000 dunums was the highest for some years, while prices were firm. There were prospects at the close of the period that the 1939-40 crop would be even higher.

Potatoes.

9. Following a reduction in yield from 12,000 tons in 1938 to 10,500 tons in 1939, growers were faced by a rise in the price of imported seed, and merchants who had responded to the urgings of the Department by importing up to double their normal quantities were unable to dispose of their stocks. This serious situation was averted by making available to cultivators £P.4,000 from the seed loan of September, 1939. By this means the area under spring-sown potatoes was greatly increased.

Vegetables, Summer Crops, Legumes and Forage.

10. A further increase in the area under vegetables, poor yields from summer grain crops and legumes, and continued strides in the production of forage, were reported.

Fruits other than Citrus.

11. The growing of deciduous fruits was depressed. The olive season was poor. Bananas showed favourable growth, but prices towards the end of the year slumped by reason of duty free bananas from Lebanon. The grape season was normal.

FISHERIES.

12. Emergency Regulations passed during the early days of the war severely restricted the movements of fishing craft and the activities of inshore fishermen; these restrictions were from time to time increased with the exigencies of the strategical situation. At the same time the prices of imported twine, rope and cork were increased considerably; while a lack of credit facilities prevented development contemplated by newly formed groups of fishermen. In these circumstances the fishing communities did well to achieve the total landing of 1,739 tons — an excess of 59 tons over the preceding year.

SECTION II.

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES AND OF THE GENERAL AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL.

Establishment.

13. Director: CAPT. F. R. MASON.

Chief Agricultural Officer: MR. G. G. MASSON.

Chief Horticultural Officer: MR. A. C. SHILL.

Irrigation Officer: MR. M. GOLDSCHMIDT.

A/Chief Plant Protection Officer: MR. P. JOLLES.

A/Chief Fisheries Officer: MR. A. JUBRAN.

14. With the improvement of security conditions touring officers and inspectors of all services were again able to travel safely in Arab districts. Certain of the agricultural and horticultural stations were re-opened, and important work was done on the production and distribution of seeds.

15. The outstanding entomological event of the year was the severe attack of the mealy bugs (*Pseudococcus* spp.) in the Jaffa citrus area. About 70,000 dunums of citrus were surveyed revealing infestation in some 23,000 dunums. Investigations into *Capnodis* sp. were continued.

16. Upon the abolition of the Department of Development during the year under review, the Irrigation Service became part of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. The service continued and even extended its investigations into the storm water run-off, surface water gauging and records, underground water records and investigations, settlement of water rights in the Jericho and Beisan irrigated plains and irrigation experiments on citrus and forage crops.

Kadoorie Agricultural Schools.

17. The Kadoorie Agricultural School at Tulkarm remained occupied by the military throughout the period to the exclusion of students. Certain activities were, however, resumed on the farm. The Kadoorie Agricultural School at Mount Tabor was reopened in October, 1939, following the evacuation by the military, and the full number of students took up residence.

General Agricultural Council.

18. After a break in its activities of about 16 months, due to the disturbances, the Council was able to hold two meetings towards the close of the period under review. The Council appointed a sub-committee to report on the possibilities of establishing a citrus control board with statutory powers, and draft legislation for such a board was subsequently submitted to Government. Sixteen meetings of the Citrus Fruit Committee and two meetings of the Committee on Agricultural Economics and Marketing were held.

SECTION III.

AGRICULTURAL LEGISLATION.

Control of Export of Citrus Ordinance.

19. 1938 rules were revised particularly regarding the dates of commencement of export, the sizes of boxes for different counts, the restriction of export of the 120 count and the quality of fruit to be exported. Provision for maturity test was reinserted and the inspection fee raised from 1½ to 2 mils per case. Exports to Egypt were exempted from the provisions of the Rules, and additional powers were given to the Chief Horticultural Officer during the latter part of the season to permit the export of packs of fruit not conforming to Rule 14 which governs the sizes of cases and counts to be packed therein.

Plant Protection Ordinance.

20. Mealy bugs (*Pseudococcus* spp.) were declared pests by Order. The phytosanitary ban on banana fruit, being the bona fide produce of Syria and Lebanon, was lifted.

Fisheries Ordinance.

21. In order to prevent over-fishing the Ordinance was amended so as to control the number of fishing vessels operating on Lake Tiberias.

Jerusalem,
28th November, 1940.

F. R. MASON
Director of Agriculture
and Fisheries.

Shirley

CERTIFIED OFFICIAL